ON THE ROLE OF THE AGREEMENT MORPHEME IN HUNGARIAN

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1. Introduction

In this article I will examine a construction in Hungarian whose classification as an adjectival compound has so far been undisputed. Arguing from its distribution, the occurrence of the agreement morpheme, and non-lexically constructed phrases, I will claim that it is neither adjectival, nor a compound. Various conditions of nominative case assignment will be discussed and a comparison with similar constructions in other languages will be outlined.

2. The data and their distribution

Certain constructions usually discussed as 'adjectival subject compounds' in the Hungarian literature can apparently have two different froms with identical meanings; one (a) consists of a noun and the past participle of a verb, while the other (b) contains a noun and also a past participle, but it has a person-marking suffix as well.

(1) (a) *sors - üldöz-ött*   (b) *sors - üldöz - t - e*
     fate   pursue PP   fate pursue   PP Px
     'pursued by fate'   'idem'

(2) (a) *por - lep - ett*   (b) *por - lep - t - e*
     dust   cover PP   PP Px
     'dust-covered'   'idem'

Other compounds of similar (a) structures cannot be converted into the person-marked (b) constructions:

(3) (a) *harc - edz - ett*   (b) ?**harc - edz - ett - e*
     battle harden PP   Px
     'hardened by battles'

(4) (a) *agy - a — lágyul - t*   (b) **agy - a - lágyul - t - a*
     brain-3sg soften PP   Px
     'softhead' (lit.: 'his-brain-softened')

(5) (a) *esz - e — vesz - ett*   (b) **esz - e - vesz - t - e*
     mind-3sg go PP   PP Px
     'desperate' (lit.: 'his-mind-gone')

Clearly, (4) and (5) differ from (1)—(3) in that they contain intransitive verbs, thus, as is usual in the literature on this question, we may suppose that the (b) type compounds can only be formed from transitive verbs. The case of (3) is somewhat more catchy: *edz* 'train, harden' is a transitive verb, but, counter to the sense-translation, it is understood as said of someone not 'hardened *by*' but 'hardened *in*' battles. Thus, strictly speaking, type (a) compounds do not all go back to subject — verb constructions.

Whereas the literature traditionally classifies all of the compounds above as adjectival—attributive, it is a highly questionable position. Certainly, adjectives can occur prenominally within noun phrases, where both type (a) and type (b) constructions are grammatical.

(6) (a)
    Látt-am egy $\begin{Bmatrix} \textit{sors-üldözött} \\ \textit{por-lepett} \\ \textit{harc-edzett} \\ \textit{esze-veszett} \end{Bmatrix}$ *ember-t.*

    saw-1sg an $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{pursued by fate} \\ \text{covered by dust} \\ \text{hardened in battles} \\ \text{desperate} \end{Bmatrix}$ man-ACC

    'I saw a man (who was) . . .'

(b) *Láttam egy* $\begin{Bmatrix} \textit{sors-üdözt-e} \\ \textit{por-lept-e} \end{Bmatrix}$ *embert.*

    'I saw a man $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{Pursued by fate.'} \\ \text{Covered by dust.'} \end{Bmatrix}$

But if this prenominal position is occupied by an AP (adjective phrase) node, we may expect all of these compounds to occur also in other AP positions. That, however, is not borne out by the data.

(7) (a) *Pál (hihetetlenül)* $\begin{Bmatrix} \textit{sors-üldözött} \\ \textit{por-lepett} \\ \textit{harc-edzett} \\ \textit{esze-veszett} \end{Bmatrix}$ *volt.*

    Paul-NOM inconceivably . . . . was

    'Paul was inconceivably $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{pursued by fate} \\ \text{dust-covered} \\ \text{hardened in battles} \\ \text{desperate} \end{Bmatrix}$

(b) **Pál (hihetetlenül)* $\begin{Bmatrix} \textit{sors-üldözt-e} \\ \textit{por-lept-e} \end{Bmatrix}$ *volt.*

(8) (a) *Pál* $\begin{Bmatrix} \textit{sors-üldözött-} \\ \textit{por-lepett-} \\ \textit{harc-edzett-} \\ \textit{esze-veszett-} \end{Bmatrix}$ *-nek tartotta János-t.*

    Paul-NOM . . .   DAT regarded John-ACC

    'Paul regarded John as $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{pursued by fate} \\ \text{dust-covered} \\ \text{hardened in battles} \\ \text{desperate} \end{Bmatrix}$

(b) **Pál* $\begin{Bmatrix} \textit{sors-üldözt-é-} \\ \textit{por-lept-é-} \end{Bmatrix}$ *-nek tartotta Jánost.*

Note that in the positions enclosed by the curly brackets in (7) and (8), any AP can occur; it is therefore reasonable to assume that type (b) constructions are not adjectives.

3. Person-marking paradigms

Before we try to answer the question of how to categorize compounds of the (b) class, let us make a short digression into the nature of the personal endings on these constructions. Observe first of all that in the works dealing with these structures it has always been recognized that it is (or at least was, at some earlier time of its history) possible to mark them for all persons in both singular and plural, cf.:

(9) (a) *a*   *tegnap*   *említ-ett-em*   *példa*
      the   yesterday   mention-PP-1sg   example
      'the example that I mentioned yesterday'

    (b) *a*   *tegnap*   *említ-ett*-ed   *példa*   2sg
    (c)   *említ-ett*-e   3sg
    (d)   *említ-ett*-ük   1pl
    (e)   *említ-ett*-étek   2pl
    (f)   *említ-ett*-ék   3pl

It is worth noting that we have ample literature on this subject since traditional grammarians can be said to have been preoccupied with this very issue because of their belief of its being distinctive of the part-of-speech (i.e. categorial) classification of the compound. It was always the choice between the nominal and the verbal nature of the suffixation that lay in the heart of the matter. If the suffixes were more like those of the possessive paradigm, the construction would prove to be nominal, but if they were to resemble the paradigm of finite verbs, the compounds could be shown to be verbal. Here I will not dwell on the, remarkably long, history of the problem, but will simply list the forms judged as acceptable.

Hungarian marks the possessor either by the dative or the nominative, but the head noun is also marked by an agreement suffix, whose relevant morphology is as follows (harmonizing vowels are given as V wherever their actual value is immaterial):[1]

(10) *The Possessive Paradigm*

    (a) Singular   (b) Plural
      1. -m   -nk
      2. -d   -tVk
      3. -(j)$_e^a$ (j)$_e^a$/(j)$_ü^u$k

    e.g. *kapu-m* 'my gate'
        gate-1sg

      a   *fiú-k*   *kapu-ja* 'the boys' gate'
      the   boy-pl-NOM   gate-3sg/pl

      az   *ő*   *kapu-juk* 'their gate'
      the   he-NOM   gate-3pl
      (NB. singular)

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[1] For more details, see Kálmán (1985) and Kornai (1986). I will not discuss the peculiarities of this paradigm, such as the behavior of the construction with a 3pl possessor exemplified below. For a discussion of the possessive construction in Hungarian, see Anna Szabolcsi's papers in the References.

(11) *Past Tense Paradigms*[2]

	(a) Definite Singular	(b) Definite Plural	(c) Indefinite Plural
1.	-m	-Vk	-Vnk
2.	-d	-V̄tVk	-tVk
3.	-a/e	-V̄k	-ak/ek

(12) *Type (b) Compound Paradigms*

	(a) Singular	(b) Plural (current)	(c) Plural (of 1939)[3]
1.	-m	-Vk	-Vnk
2.	-d	-V̄tVk	-tVk
3.	-a/e	-a/e	-a/e
			-uk/ük

Obviously, the singular paradigms (10a), (11a), and (12a) present no problems: they are identical. The plural forms, however, show an amazing variation. (We should not be misled by (12c), which is in complete equivalence with (10b), since its bottom line is undoubtedly an artificial construct, while the first two lines are markedly archaic and/or dialectal.[4]) But this diversity should not perplex us; the individual morphological forms of person marking may legitimately vary with respect to environment. When attached to a noun, it may take a shape different from one affixed to a finite or non-finite verb. This is a phenomenon frequently encountered in the languages of the world; an example in Hungarian could be the choice of the -*i*- vs. -*k*- form of the plural affix, which depends on whether the noun is in a possessive construction or not.

Person marking can then be considered to be a unitary category whose actual inflectional form is a function of the stem (containing any possible derivational affix, e.g., infinitival, participial, etc.). Having clarified this, however, takes us no closer to answering the question of what type (b) constructions actually are.

4. The problem of compoundhood

Since compounds are a result of a lexical process, they do not contain proper names (in their referential use) or categories above zero-level in the terminology of X-bar theory. That is, whereas compounds like *student therapy* or *teacher-constructed* (*example*) are perfectly possible, *Kingston therapy*, on one

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[2] As is well-known, verbs are marked for definite objects as against indefinite ones or the absence of an object.

[3] This is from Szepesi (1939), who cites them without giving any evidence, whether historical or other. Note that Simonyi (1907) does list data for the first three lines of (12c), but he has no examples for the notorious bottom line -*uk/ük*.

[4] Presumably Szepesi (1939) was somewhat biased to consider type (b) constructions as having possessive endings, following Simonyi (1907). He did not, however, recognize that the paradigm will thereby be identical to that of infinitives, a point that will come up in the discussion below.

hand, can only be understood as containing a non-referential mention of a certain Kingston and as referring to some *kind* of therapy rather than to a therapy carried out on or by someone called Kingston. On the other hand *a friendly teacher constructed (example)*, in which we find a non-zero level projection (*friendly teacher*), is totally ungrammatical.

These conditions are, in general, observed by Hungarian compounds too. But type (b) constructions can contain both referential proper names and non-zero level or even maximal projections.

(13) (a) *a Mari említ-ett-e példa*
the Mary-NOM mention-PP-3sg example
'the example mentioned by Mary'

(b) *a Dánia el-foglal-t-a területek*
the Denmark-NOM perf-occupy-PP-3sg territories
'the territories occupied by Denmark'

(c) *a kedves feleség-ed mutat-t-a képek*
the kind wife-your-NOM show-PP-3sg pictures
'the pictures shown by your kind wife'

(14) (a) **a Mari említett példa*
(b) **a Dánia (el)foglalt területek*
(c) **a kedves feleséged mutatott képek*

It would follow then that type (a) constructions as in (14) are indeed compounds, exactly because they are ungrammatical, while type (b) expressions are not.

Recall also that, as was illustrated in (3), certain type (a) compounds are not convertible into type (b) constructions, which was said to be due to their not containing a logical subject. Below we repeat (3a) along with an additional example.

(15) (a) *harc-edz-ett*   (b) **harc-edz-ett-e*
battle harden-PP   3sg
'hardened in battles'

(16) (a) *szél-véd-ett*   (b) **szél-véd-t-e*
wind protect-PP   3sg
'protected from the wind'

Whereas the noun in (15a) can, in principle, receive subject interpretation, that is hardly available for (16a).[5]

[5] Note that type (a) constructions are more and more shifting out of productive use. I have only been able to coin new ones of the "weather-agent" type, e.g., *vihar-tépett* 'storm-torn', *eső-mosott* 'rain-washed', *villámlás-pusztított* 'lightning-destroyed'. Still, the distinction is real: proper names and non-zero level projections are fully acceptable in type (b) constructions, but they have never surfaced in the historical data of type (a) compounds.

But the problem of whether or not it is (logical) subjecthood that is distinctive in (15a, b) is rendered irrelevant by the following set of examples, which show that type (b) constructions are unacceptable unless they contain an argument that has an external theta-role, i.e. an agent.

(17) (a) **a Mari szeret-t-e emberek*
the Mary-NOM love-PP-3sg people
'the people loved by Mary'

(b) **a Mari tud-t-a vers*
know-PP-3sg poem
'the poem known by Mary'

(c) **a könyv tartalmaz-t-a szavak*
book-NOM contain-PP-3sg words
'the words contained by the book'

This requirement will also subsume the case of (3a, b), where the noun cannot be an agent, whether or not it is the subject.

We have thus arrived at the interim conclusion that type (b) constructions are not compounds (derived through some lexical rule) but syntactic categories of the subject — predicate type. If that is the case, the subject NPs within them must be marked for some case, say, nominative, according to the Case Filter, which demands that every NP with a phonetic matrix have Case.

5. Case Assignment

Nominative case has been shown to occur in two constructions in Hungarian: (a) in tensed sentences, and (b) in possessive constructions. Since the category of Tense does not play any role in the latter, Case Assignment must be dependent on the AGR constituent of INFL.

(18) (a) *Te tud-t-ad a vers-et.*
you(sg)-NOM know-Past-Def. 2sg the poem-ACC
'You knew the poem.'

(b) *a te ház-ad*
the you-NOM house-sg
'your house'

Whereas in tensed sentences the subject need not be placed next to the inflected verb, as this position is reserved for the focus, some adjacency requirement is in force in possessive constructions. If the head noun, which is marked for agreement, is separated from the specifier by the definite article, the nomi-

native case is unavailable for the possessor, and it must be marked dative. Note that if the possessor is outside the NP containing the head, which is a standard discontinuous construction in Hungarian, it must also be in the dative.

(19) (a) *Olvastam* [*János könyv-é-t*]
     I-have-read John-NOM book-3sg-ACC
     'I have read John's book.'
  (b) **Olvastam* [*János a könyvét*]
                the
  (c) *Olvastam* [*János-nak a könyvét*]
                 DAT
  (d) *Jánosnak olvastam a könyvét*

It is also worth mentioning that a third context in which person marking occurs allows subjects only in the dative. The infinitial constructions given below can in general be split up and their constituents placed anywhere in the matrix clause. Arguably, there are no infinitival clauses at S-structure in Hungarian, but the discussion of this issue would take us too far afield.

(20) (a) *János-nak Péter-rel kell-ett beszél-ni-e.*
     John-DAT Peter-with must-Past speak-Inf-3sg
     'John had to speak with Peter.'
  (b) *Nek-tek kár volt dolgoz-no-tok.*
     DAT-you(pl) no-use was work-Inf.-2pl
     'It was no use for you to work.'

Thus it seems that there are two prerequisites for a noun phrase to receive nominative case: (1) the head (i.e. V or INFL in S, N in NP) must be marked for agreement, and (2) the NP must be adjacent to the head (except in tensed clauses). The constructions discussed here observe both criteria: the non-finite verbs are affixed for agreement and the subject must not be separated from the verb by any material not part of the lexical entry for the verb.

(21) (a) *a Mari (meg-) vizsgál-t-a betegek*
     the Mary-NOM perf. examine-PP-3sg patients
     'the patients examined by Mary'
  (b) **a Mari tegnap (meg)vizsgálta betegek*
               yesterday

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⁶ We are not concerned here with accounting for the often intriguing behavior of possessive constructions in Hungarian. For some discussion, see in addition to Szabolcsi's work, Kornai (1989) and Kenesei (1986).

The ungrammaticality of (21b) is comparable to that of a tensed sentence in which the (would-be) focus is separated from the inflected verb by some other constituent.

(22) (a) *Tegnap Mari vizsgálta meg a betegeket.*
     yesterday Mary-NOM examined Perf. the patients-ACC
     'It was Mary that examined the patients yesterday.'
  (b) **Mari tegnap vizsgálta meg a betegeket.*

(Note that (22b) is starred only if *Mari*, rather than *tegnap*, is in focus.)
    A few further problems still remain. For example, we have no answer to the question of why there cannot be type (b) constructions of more than two constituents: usually subject plus verb, cf.:

(23)   **a tegnap Mari (meg-)vizsgálta betegek*
     the yesterday Mary-NOM Perf.-examined patients
     'the patients examined by Mary yesterday'

And it need not always be the subject that fills in for the preverbal constituent; in other than third person forms, as is usual in this pro-drop language, personal pronouns can be omitted. But then the occurrence of another preverbal constituent seems to be obligatory.

(24) (a) *a ?*(most) említ-ett-em példa*
     the   now mention-PP-1sg example
     'the example I just mentioned'
  (b) *az ?*(imént) idéz-t-ük mondat*
     the just quote-PP-1pl sentence
     'the sentence we just quoted'

Certainly, person marking in other than third persons is rather archaic or awkward and has been replaced by the use of the paradigm of the emphatic/reflexive pronouns *magam* 'myself', *magad* 'yourself', etc., which invariably trigger agreement in the third person both here and in the possessive constructions (contrary to tensed sentences, where it requires ordinary agreement)

(25) (a) *?a tegnap készít-ett-em kép*
     the yesterday make-PP-1sg picture
     'the picture I made yesterday'
  (b) *a magam készít-ett-e kép*
     myself-NOM   3sg
     'the picture I made (myself)'

(c) *a magam kép-e/*kép-em*
             3sg   1sg
    'my (own) picture/a picture of myself'

(d) *A   képet   magam   készít-ett-em/*-e.*
    the picture-ACC myself-NOM make-Past-1sg/3sg
    'I made the picture myself.'

6. Categorization

As was seen in the foregoing sections, the constructions discussed are best treated as non-finite clauses. We may suppose that in Hungarian, as in a number of other languages (mainly of the SOV type), there is a prenominal S position within the NP to be filled in either by finite clauses (as in Japanese, Korean, Sinhalese) or by non-finite ones (as in most Altaic and a large number of Uralic languages). That is why these clauses cannot occur in the position of ordinary adjectives; on the one hand, they are not adjectival, and, on the other, they contain an empty category that is left uncontrolled if the clause is outside the NP.

Observe that other, allegedly adjectival, constructions also exhibit the behavior illustrated in (7) and (8), i.e., they cannot be classified as adjectives on distributional grounds.

(26) (a) *a   betegeket   vizsgáló   orvos*
          the patients-ACC examining doctor
          'the doctor examining the patients'

    (b) **Mari betegeket vizsgáló volt/maradt*
          Mary   was remained

(27) (a) *a   tegnap   megvizsgált   betegek*
          the yesterday examined   patients
          'the patients examined yesterday'

    (b) **A beteg [tegnap megvizsgált] volt*

Note also that since the non-finite verb has no person-marking (i.e. AGR), no nominative subject/agent can occur in (27a), although an agent marked by a specific agentive case-suffix or postposition is possible.

(28) (a) **a Mari   tegnap   megvizsgált   betegek*
          the Mary-NOM yesterday examined   patients

    (b) *a* Mari $\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{-tól} \\ \text{által} \end{matrix} \right\}$ *tegnap megvizsgált betegek*
                    by
          'the patients examined by Mary yesterday'

7. Nominative case in non-finite clauses in other languages

Some of the languages that have prenominal non-finite clauses apply person-marking on the verb, but we have no reason to suppose that the subject is in a case other than genitive, cf.:

(29) Turkish (source: Sezer (1986))
    (a) *sen-in   gör-düğ-ün   filim*
        you-GEN   see-Part-2sg film
        'the movie that you saw'

    (b) *al-dığ-ı araba*
        buy-Part-3sg car
        the car he bought

(30) Finnish (source: T. Mikola (personal communication))
    (a) *isä-n   teke-mä   tuoli*
        father-GEN make-Af chair
        'the chair the father made'

    (b) *Isä   istun teke-mä-llä-nsä   tuoli-lla.*
        father-NOM sat   make-Afx-Case-3sg chair-Superess.
        'The father sat on the chair he had made.'

Note that while Turkish has obligatory person marking all along, Finnish makes use of it only in case there is an (overt or covert) personal pronoun in the subject/possessor position.

Ostyak, a Finno-Ugric language, and Evenki, another Siberian language of the Tungusic family, resemble the pattern seen in Hungarian more closely than Turkish or Finnish.

(31) Ostyak (source: Hajdú (1973))
    mä   wǝmam   weli   kalas
    I-NOM bought-1sg reindeer perished
    'The reindeer I bought has perished.'

(32) Evenki (source: Comrie (1981))
    bi pis'mo-wa ga-ća   bi-si-m   akii-m
    I letter-ACC receive-PastPart. be-Pres-1sg brother-1sg
    min-dulǝǝ unǯǝ-rii-wǝǝ-n
    I-LOC   send-Part-ACC-3sg
    'I have received the letter which my brother sent to me.'

In (31), the head noun is preceded by the person marked participle and the personal pronoun in the nominative. In (32), the sentence final participle is related to its head by the accusative affix on the verb form, which agrees in person and number with the nominative subject of the clause.

8. Conclusion

It has been shown that what was called;"type (b) constructions" are non-finite clauses within NPs. That is why they allow person marking (i.e. AGR) to occur, which in turn makes it possible to assign nominative case to the subject under certain conditions. They conform to the behavior of non-finite clauses in this language and resemble corresponding structures in other languages.

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LEXICAL MECHANISMS VERSUS MORPHOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

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1. Introduction

Of late quite a number of linguists have tried to work out the general idea that languages should be regarded as systems in which a large number of — interacting and opposing forces — contend. Languages, in this view, are by definition in an unsteady equilibrium: they always involve some sort of compromise between the diverse forces they comprise. Crucial to this — interactionist — conception of language is also, that the pressure to achieve linguistic optimality is nearly always considered "local", i.e. it can be seen to concentrate on one part of the system while leading to less desired results in other parts. Put differently, due to the multi-faceted character of language, the pressure to linguistic optimality nearly always focuses on one aspect/component of the language, which implies that other kinds of linguistic optimality (bearing upon other facets of the language) often deteriorate.[1]

With respect to word-formation the above conception of language has been elaborated in so-called n a t u r a l   m o r p h o l o g y, a trend which, since its very beginning, involves such an interactionist model (Dressler, 1986). In their search for forces which are in conflict with the principles of word-formation — and which, consequently, may affect optimal morphological structure —, the adherents of natural morphology have rightly stressed that particularly phonetics/phonology is a domain of language which accomodates many forces undermining the transparency of morphology. No doubt Mayerthaler is correct when he characterizes phonology as k o n t r a m o r p h o l o-g i s c h (i.e. counter-morphological), which means that in his view phonology and morphology (apart from just a few exceptions) can never be optimalized at the same time (Mayerthaler, 1981, 43).

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[1] General studies in which this conception of language is elaborated are Koefoed (1974; 1978) and Dik (1986). Cf. also Dressler (1986) (with many further references) and Mayerthaler (1981) for morphology, Langacker (1977) for syntax, and Van Marle (1978) for an attempt to interpret morphological change in terms of two opposing forces